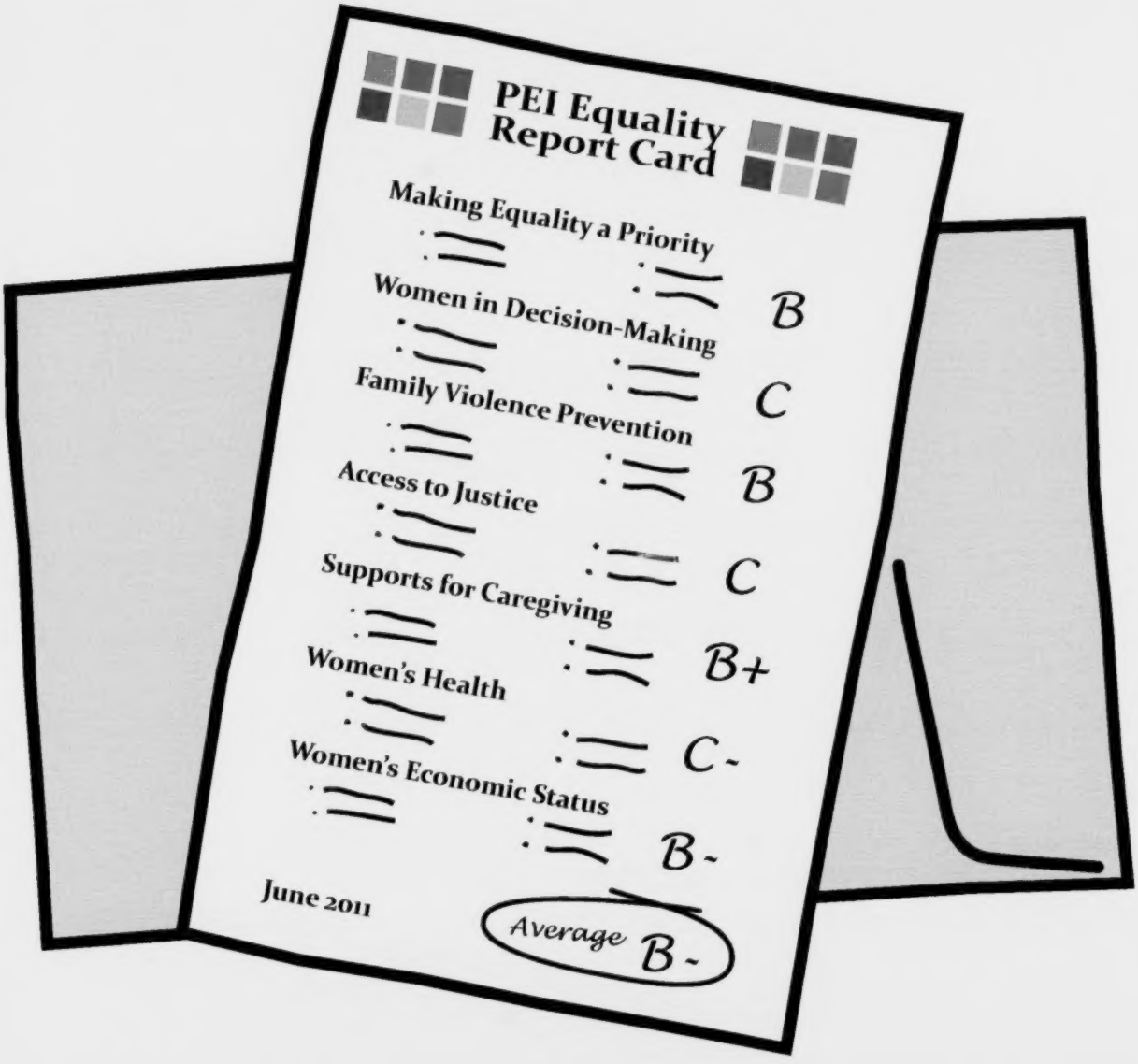
Prince Edward Island
Advisory Council on the Status of Women

2011 PEI Equality Report Card



Introduction

The Equality Report Card is a process to assess our Province's progress towards women's equality goals. The PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women's goal is to work collaboratively with government to help the Province to achieve high grades in all priority areas.

Assessments in the 2011 Equality Report Card are based on benchmarks set in the 2009 Equality Report Card. In June 2010, the Advisory Council published an interim trends report on progress towards women's equality goals.

A Fair and Collaborative Process

- PEI Status of Women distributed the 2009 Equality Report Card to all government departments, along with a proposed timeline and assessment criteria for 2011.
- PEI Status of Women staff invited each department of government to appoint a representative and offered customized orientation sessions.
- Each department of government completed a questionnaire about actions their department had taken to support women's equality and diversity.
- All members of the Advisory Council reviewed information from departments and from Council research and recorded their individual assessments through a survey.
- Advisory Council staff conducted a focus group with women who are not represented by community organizations that the Council usually consults about the Equality Report Card. (See page 20 for more information.)
- Using the survey results and focus group comments, the Advisory Council members set draft grades in each priority area, in a collaborative and consensus-based workshop. Members gave direction about the analysis to support each grade.
- PEI Status of Women staff shared draft grades and analysis with government representatives for corrections, updates, and other input.
- PEI Status of Women members and staff shared draft grades and analysis with community members and community organizations for corrections, updates, and other input.
- Members of the Advisory Council made any changes they felt were necessary to the grades and analysis, based on feedback and new information from government and community.
- PEI Status of Women staff finalized and released the Equality Report Card.

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND
Advisory Council on the Status of
WOMEN

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Assessments based on information
updated to May 30, 2011

Assessment

Category	2009	2011
Making Equality a Priority	C+	**B**
Women in Decision-Making	C	**C**
Family Violence Prevention	B-	**B**
Access to Justice	C+	**C**
Supports for Caregiving	C	**B+**
Women's Health	C-	**C-**
Women's Economic Status	D	**B-**
Overall Average	**C**	**B-**

↗ A grade of "B –" means government has taken some important, concrete steps towards women's equality goals since 2009, when government's overall grade was a "C." We congratulate government for this progress and look forward to continued progress in the future.

↗ Among the highlights of government's work, the Advisory Council particularly notes landmark investments in early childhood care and education; the continuing prominent role of women in the public service; encouraging support for the use of woman abuse protocols; and the publication of an up-to-date statistical profile of PEI women.

↗ There has been substantial new or renewed focus on affordable housing, home care for seniors, employment standards legislation, and targeted initiatives for family violence prevention.

→ In most other areas the Advisory Council has identified as important for women's equality, there have been small and medium-sized steps. In a few other areas, there has been little or no change since 2009. In particular need of attention are initiatives to examine MLAs' roles and reduce barriers to women in elected office, to provide gender-sensitive mental health and addiction services, and to improve access to legal aid for family matters.

MAKING EQUALITY A PRIORITY: B

To make women's equality a priority, we expect the provincial government to meet its commitments to analyze the effects on everyday Island women of existing and proposed legislation, policy, and budgeting. This means applying gender- and diversity-based analysis and collecting and using up-to-date sex-disaggregated data.

Commitment to applying gender- and diversity-based analysis (GBA) throughout government — B-

↗ Some departments are doing a very good job applying GBA, and, while progress is uneven, government as a whole is showing improvement. The Advisory Council strongly argues that applying GBA and advancing women's equality go hand in hand, so it is notable that the grade for applying gender analysis and the government's overall grade are both B –. Council members consider B – a good grade, with potential for improvement. We call on government to focus on future steps.

↗ Government has been making a concerted effort to ensure there is a representative with a gender lens on committees and projects that are important to women's equality. It is a good step that the Director of the Interministerial Women's Secretariat is now a member of the Senior Management Team of Community Services; this elevates the profile of gender and diversity analysis and means the Women's Secretariat is now directly involved in reviewing policies to ensure GBA.

↗ The Council is looking forward to a progress update on a pilot program to train staff in Community Services, Seniors and Labour in gender- and diversity-based analysis. We appreciate that we have been invited to review the training materials and make input. We look forward to hearing how training will extend beyond one department in future.

↗ There is now for the first time an Atlantic Forum of Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women, including Hon. Janice Sherry, PEI's Minister Responsible for the Status of Women. The Minister Responsible speaks in the House to mark occasions important to women, sends out news releases and speaks at public events. The Advisory Council looks forward to finding ways to increase the profile of Minister Sherry in her role as Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

→ Several government departments report that GBA is being done. For example, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Education provided us an interesting glimpse into how gender and diversity are integrated in curriculum. However, Advisory Council members would be interested to see concrete examples of policy papers from other departments with GBA attached and integrated, so Council could evaluate the content being provided and the evidence being used to support gender and diversity analysis.

↘ Despite repeated calls for a gender analysis of the situation of the Eastern School District Board of Trustees from the Advisory Council and the Coalition for Women in Government, there is no evidence that the difficulties with this board (which led to its dissolution) were examined with a gender lens.

Focus Group Highlights

Participants in a focus group identified job creation as a major priority, especially jobs that are flexible with hours of work or that align with daycare hours for young families, especially lone parents. Focus group participants saw support for child care and public transit as essential for allowing workforce participation. They put highest priority on investment in youth drop-in centres, distributed in communities across PEI, with access to information about employment, programs, services, recreation, and opportunities. Youth development services (skills building, confidence boosting) were another high priority.

MAKING EQUALITY A PRIORITY, *continued*

Steps to ensure that women will benefit equally from government's proposed economic development plans — C+

↗ The Advisory Council members think that making connections between women and economic development plans is a key to progress that includes women and benefits families. Government is doing a better job than in 2009 at making these connections. A highlight: investment in early childhood care and education means increased wages for early childhood educators – and it means increased access to early childhood care and education that supports women's workforce participation.

→ The Advisory Council is heartened to see the *Rural Action Plan* making specific links between the action plan's goals and benefits for women and people with low income in rural Prince Edward Island. Council members are pleased with the increased awareness of gender in work in the Rural Development division. However, it continues to be unclear what connections and opportunities are being created for rural women in food production and our crucial traditional farming and fishing industries. It also remains unclear how women and vulnerable Islanders will benefit from the *Island Prosperity Agenda*.

↗ Two investments in infrastructure that will create opportunity for women: 1) the first substantial provincial investment in public transit, which supports access to work, programs, and services, and 2) widespread access to rural broadband across PEI, which creates potential for home-based businesses or for working from home.

↗ The Advisory Council celebrates the Trade HERizons project, funded by the Province and managed by Women's Network PEI. This three-year pilot project promotes gender equality in trades and technology careers and enhances the economic well-being of women through a women-centred community economic development model. We are concerned that the LMA fund that supports Trade HERizons is reduced dramatically for this upcoming year, and we advocate for this vital project not to face cuts, but rather to be renewed with an expanded pool of candidates.

↗ The Advisory Council congratulates government for developing a Settlement Strategy for Prince Edward Island after a series of consultations.

↘ Advisory Council members continue to be concerned about the absence of people with disabilities from economic development planning.

Update of 1996 statistical profile of women on PEI — A

↗ The up-to-date statistical profile of PEI women, *Women in PEI: A Statistical Review 2010* has been completed, translated into French, printed, made available on-line and distributed. The Advisory Council calls this a significant step. The statistical review provides useful sex-disaggregated data on households, education, work and income, health, justice, violence against women, women and leadership, and caregiving.

↗ The process used for creating the statistical profile, including extensive community consultation, is a good model and has resulted in a product that responds to needs the community has identified for data to support their work.

→ Next steps expected: The Advisory Council on the Status of Women will be looking for evidence that the statistical review is being used to support gender-based analysis in policy-making. The Advisory Council strongly recommends that government make a public commitment to update the *Women in PEI: Statistical Review* every five years.

The members of the Advisory Council are encouraged to see evidence that gender-based analysis has entered the consciousness of government. Now that updated sex-disaggregated data is available, there is a new tool to facilitate systematic analysis of the different impacts policies may have on women and men and diverse groups. This is good news.

WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING: C

To increase women's participation in the highest levels of decision-making, we expect the provincial government to actively encourage women's advancement and break down barriers to women's leadership.

Increased equality in appointments to agencies, boards, and commissions — C

↗ Numbers suggest that gender balance is being considered in appointments to agencies, boards, and commissions. Still, the proportion of women who apply to and are appointed by Participate PEI has increased very slightly since 2009. Women make up just over 30% of applicants (up 1%) and 41% of appointees (up 2%).

→ Only 27% of chair and vice-chair appointments since 2009 have been women (up 2% from 2009). The Advisory Council calls on government to make changes to the Participate PEI process that would help redress the gender imbalance in leadership on agencies, boards, and commissions.

→ Government has improved the information available on the Participate PEI website for potential applicants. Participate PEI reports a future plan for online application forms and for a demographic survey of appointees that will form the basis for recruitment to meet diversity goals. These are steps the Advisory Council will be watching for and assessing for their inclusiveness and effectiveness.

→ The Advisory Council members suggest it is time for an evaluation of Participate PEI. We would be pleased to participate in consultations.

Gender focus and gender-based strategies applied in the Special Committee on the Role of the MLA, to examine and reduce barriers to women in elected office — D

↘ Government promised a Special Committee on the Role of the MLA in the 2008 Speech from the Throne, but the Committee was never struck. The grading criteria for the Equality Report Card set the status quo at a D grade.

↘ According to *Women in PEI: A Statistical Profile*, research shows that PEI MLAs, 25.9% of whom are women, "spend more time than MLAs in other provinces and territories on constituency duties, which has an impact on work-life balance, and discourages many women from running." Lack of work-life balance similarly affects male and female MLAs who are parents of young families.

↘ The failure to strike this committee represents several lost opportunities. For instance, the Committee would have provided an opportunity for the Advisory Council to advance advocacy for a code of conduct for elected officials; in fact, information we received from the Legislative Management Committee shows that a similar committee on MLAs' roles in 1995 did explore ethics and the interpersonal behaviour of elected officials but did not report on discussion or decisions.

→ The Advisory Council respects that the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women played a role in urging that this committee be moved forward. We thank her.

WOMEN IN DECISION-MAKING, *continued*

Increased employment equity, especially women in leadership roles, within the provincial civil service — B+

↗ Women make up 72% of the public service (up negligibly from 71% in 2009) and 56% of managers (up from 53% in 2009). The apparent imbalance comes from Health PEI, where women make up 85% of the workforce and 78% of managers. If we exclude Health PEI from calculations, women make up almost 53% of the rest of the public service and 45% of managers.

↗ The balance between the proportion of women workers and the proportion of women managers is improving. In three departments (Agriculture, Justice and Public Safety, and Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal), women make up a higher proportion of managers than of women in the departmental workforce. In Community Services, Seniors and Labour, there is a less than five-point gap. In three more departments (Environment, Finance and Municipal Affairs, and Health), there is a less than ten-point difference between the percentage of women workers and the percentage of women managers.

→ Work remains to be done to create better balance in job categories. About 80% of the women in the public service work in health, education, and social services – areas that could be considered "traditional" roles for women. By contrast, women make up a slim 17% of year-round workers in Transportation and Infrastructure Renewal. In the Advisory Council's view, an overbalance of women in some departments is not healthy, either, and more needs to be done to encourage men's work in roles that have been non-traditional for their gender.

→ In five departments there is still a significant gap between the percentage of women workers and the percentage of women managers: a greater than 10-point gap in Education and Early Childhood Development, and Tourism and Culture, and a greater than 20-point gap in Innovation and Advanced Learning and its agencies, Executive Council, and Fisheries, Aquaculture and Rural Development.

→ It is difficult to measure to what extent government actively recruits or selects candidates because of its gender and diversity policies or whether in a "gender-neutral" environment, with hiring based on "merit," women are simply the best candidates.

→ According to *Women in PEI: A Statistical Profile*, Prince Edward Island still has a substantial gender wage gap, though it is the smallest gap among the Canadian provinces. Women who work full year, full time average 81.8% of men's average earnings. Good jobs in the public service are important to closing the gap.

The Advisory Council on the Status of Women looks forward to a time when women are fairly represented among government's elected officials, appointed advisors, and hired staff. Overall, there have been small steps towards achieving balance. The biggest steps have been led by the public service, where policies support gender and diversity balance; smaller but important steps have followed in appointments to ABCs, where policies are being enhanced to improve gender and diversity balance. There is a lag in policy to support better representation of women in elected office. The lack of the Special Committee on the Role of the MLA is just one missed opportunity to discuss ways to reduce barriers to women in politics.

FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION: B

To reduce violence in our province, we expect the provincial government to provide for community-based, women-led, pro-feminist programs and services that prevent violence against women specifically and family violence more generally, and that provide services when violence occurs.

Enhanced core funding for Family Violence Prevention Services and the Rape and Sexual Assault Centre to support them to flourish as community organizations — C

↗ The Advisory Council welcomes increases to the grant for Family Violence Prevention Services, $69,000 in each of 2009-2010 and 2010-2011, to cover operational costs.

↘ The additional funding that FVPS received over the past two fiscal years was not forthcoming in 2011-2012. However, FVPS did receive a modest increase of $7,700 for the fiscal year 2011-2012. The shortfall in core funding means that the Board will face a significant revenue shortfall along with its annual commitment of fundraising $60,000 to meet its operational budget. A long-term plan for adequate core public support is needed.

↘ In the Advisory Council's view, the small ($2,300) increase last year to the Rape and Sexual Assault Centre budget is not sufficient to keep pace with increased costs. There has been no increase to their budget this year.

→ The Advisory Council members suggest that the staff at Family Violence Prevention Services and the Rape and Sexual Assault Centre are underpaid for the kind of work they do, dealing with trauma day after day. Council calls on government to support these organizations in a way that allows them to maintain qualified staff and remunerate them well for their work. Government benefits from the work they do, in that it offsets work of social workers and health workers within the public service.

Increased application of existing Woman Abuse Protocols, with more protocols developed as needed — B+

↗ The Advisory Council on the Status of Women is pleased to see both increased application of Woman Abuse Protocols and new protocols being developed.

↗ The entire Family Law Section of the Department of Justice developed a spousal abuse protocol that came into effect in November 2010. All Family Law staff received training on the protocol in May 2010.

↗ The Police Response to Domestic Disputes protocol was revised and updated in 2010; all municipal services, security police officers at UPEI, and the RCMP have endorsed it.

↗ All Department of Justice protocols were updated and distributed as part of an updated Policy Binder and were posted on the Department website to help ensure use on a consistent and ongoing basis.

↗ There appears to be more good news to come. A working group is developing a policy for the Disabilities Support Program (a strong recommendation from the Advisory Council in the past), a working group is revising the policy for the Social Assistance program, and a sub-committee has been set up to update the province's Child Sexual Abuse Protocol. We look forward to updates on this work and encourage Community Services to develop a new protocol for child protection.

→ There have been no changes to Woman Abuse Protocols in Health and Wellness since 2009. These protocols should be examined to determine if they require updates or if staff are receiving ongoing training to ensure the protocols are being applied.

FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION, *continued*

Targetted programs for preventing violence against women of various ages (youth, seniors) and/or various vulnerable groups (Aboriginal women, women with disabilities, new immigrant women) B

↗ The members of the Advisory Council put a very high value on the work of the renewed Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention and the Family Violence Prevention and Community Development Coordinator, especially when their work meaningfully includes women's organizations and vulnerable populations, and when it complements the work of community-based groups. The Seniors' Secretariat and Children's Secretariat, too, are playing their role in awareness building through public education initiatives and projects.

↗ There have been many and varied initiatives to support violence prevention for all ages and for vulnerable groups. A few actions the Advisory Council would like to highlight: amendments to the Child Protection Act so it includes 16-17 year olds to better protect them from abuse and neglect; changes to Child protection to increase partnerships with the Aboriginal community; the new Police Act and its training regulations that increase training requirements on domestic violence intervention; Police Act mechanisms for complaints against the police; a new Aboriginal Victim Assistant Program in Victim Services in collaboration with the Mi'kmaq Confederacy to respond to needs of Aboriginal victims of crime; and Victim Services publications translated for newcomers. These initiatives are all good news.

Focus Group Highlights

Participants in a focus group put a high priority on preventing unwanted pregnancies, especially among young women. They called for free birth control for young teens and for access to abortion services. They identified access to shelter (women's shelters, and homelessness shelters) and appropriate, safe housing as primary needs to be met for women to be safe from violence.

↗ The Advisory Council appreciates the flourishing of training events and conferences that put the spotlight on family violence prevention. In the past two years, these have included Family Violence Education for Professionals, with a focus on children, and training sessions by White Ribbon Campaign's Michael Kaufman, with a focus on what boys and men can do to prevent violence.

→ *Women in PEI: A Statistical Review* reminds us that in 2009, 84 women and 51 children used Anderson House. In 2008/2009, 517 women called the FVPS emergency line. During a six-month study period in 2009, FVPS outreach served 335 women, most of them with children under 16. From 2007 to 2010, 91.9% of new requests for service at the Rape and Sexual Assault Centre came from women, and almost a quarter of them were women between 18 and 24 years old.

Violence against women continues to be a focus for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women. In the past two years, we have seen increased funding to support Family Violence Prevention Services and the positive effects of renewing the mandate of the Premier's Action Committee on Family Violence Prevention and filling the Family Violence Prevention Coordinator position. These are important steps. Too many women continue to live with violence and fear – any is too many – and the Advisory Council will continue to press for policies to prevent violence and support victims and survivors.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE: C

Access to family law legal aid continues to be a challenge for Island women. Most calls to the PEI Status of Women office continue to be from women who need a lawyer's advice. In many cases, they cannot afford a lawyer. We expect government to continue to place high priority on ensuring women and families have access to justice.

Improved access to family law legal aid lawyers — D

→ There have been no changes in access to family law legal aid lawyers since 2009. The grading criteria for the Equality Report Card set the status quo at a D grade.

→ Advisory Council members are pleased that budget increases from 2008 appear to have been maintained. The Advisory Council also commends legal aid lawyers for providing good service for their clients. However, as in 2009, access to legal help for family matters for women and men with low and middle incomes is inadequate. The justice system is not accessible in a way that lets people solve their own problems; under the current system, there is no way around needing a lawyer in many cases. The Advisory Council would like to play a role in imagining and supporting better options; in the meantime, we need more family law legal aid lawyers, for the criteria for legal aid eligibility to be changed and expanded, and for more resources to be put into materials for self-represented litigants.

→ Statistics bear out women's need for legal aid, according to figures from *Women in PEI: A Statistical Review*. In 2008-2009, women made up 75% of family and civil law legal aid recipients. In the same year, 68% of the 863 new referrals to Victim Services were women. Comparing the family income of couple families and lone-parent families also points to the challenge of paying for legal help while making a major family transition such as separation or divorce. The median income for PEI lone-parent families in 2006 was $30,900, compared to $62,300 for couple families. Women lead more than 80% of lone-parent families in PEI.

Actions to implement the recommendations of the Justice Options for Women project — B

↗ One of the most important current projects of the Justice Options for Women project is the Circles of Safety and Support project, which facilitates safety planning for women facing a high risk of violence. Government representatives are working on a plan to make the Circles sustainable after the life of the current project, and the Advisory Council offers strong encouragement for this plan.

↗ Staff from Victim Services, the Interministerial Women's Secretariat, and the Family Violence Prevention and Community Development Coordinator continue to model supportive, collaborative relationships with the Justice Options for Women project that extend the work of this community-based project.

→ The primary recommendation that emerged from the multi-year Justice Options for Women project was for a domestic violence court option, which is making very slow progress, as discussed on the next page.

Focus Group Highlights

In a focus group, participants (including women facing violence) reported they are still facing the kinds of barriers that led to the Justice Options for Women project. They reported the need for less intimidating court options, supports for women to stand up in court (to stand up for themselves and stand up against abusers), and equitable treatment of people under the law. They wanted programs and services for people facing violence – and for abusers – to be available in the mainstream, with no stigma for asking for help.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE, *continued*

Steps towards a domestic violence court option C-

→ Government reports, "Discussions have been initiated with Policy Board by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety and the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women." The Advisory Council is waiting hopefully to hear the results of these discussions.

→ In the time since Justice Options for Women recommended a PEI family violence court option, both New Brunswick and Nova Scotia have proceeded with implementing domestic violence courts; in fact, the court in Moncton has been made permanent after a successful pilot project. The Advisory Council asks: Is there anything that our neighbouring provinces learned that could help PEI meet implementation challenges?

↗ In the absence of a domestic violence court option, Justice and Public Safety is undertaking some good work. Advisory Council members value steps government has taken to address challenges faced by families who have to deal simultaneously with the family and criminal justice systems. Council members also value updates to the Family Violence Act to include same-sex relationships. Other changes to this Act improve recognition of protection orders between provinces/territories to protect victims of violence. The Department is also working towards a system to link civil and criminal orders in family violence cases involving children.

→ A reminder of the value and importance of using and improving tools available through the Victims of Family Violence Act: *Women in PEI: A Statistical Review* reports that women victims receive at least 95% of Emergency Protection Orders.

→ Advisory Council members suggest it may be time for government to consult the community about community partnerships to support development of a domestic violence court option.

Focus Group Highlights

Participants in a focus group put a strong emphasis on needs related to family law. Among other things, they were looking for affordable or free legal counsel for all families that need it, coaching about court processes, and better access to information and help to sort out child support and custody. They found hard-to-understand terms such as "Maintenance Enforcement" alienating and discouraging. They wanted information sessions to provide clear, plain language information about family law across the province and through neutral public locations, such as Access PEI centres. The Advisory Council suggests CLIA's work to provide clear legal information could valuably be expanded, with more resources.

A major flaw of the justice system is its historical focus on property rights. Focus group participants were baffled by sentences that seem to value property over people.

Many of the needs focus group participants identified could conceivably be addressed by a domestic violence court option built on a strong model.

Members of the Advisory Council recognize that access to legal aid for family matters is complicated. It is difficult to imagine an amount of government funding that would keep pace with demand. We need to find more diverse, out-of-court options for people, and to promote them and make them accessible. For as long as traditional court-based justice approaches remain the primary way of settling family disputes, demand will continue to outpace government funding for help. For now, and for as long as the court-based model is prominent, lack of access to legal aid will have negative effects for women and their families.

More generally, many other issues discussed in this Equality Report Card have an impact on the justice system, including addictions, homelessness, and mental health problems. Future Equality Report Cards would benefit from looking at activities that depend on partnerships, policies, and programs at every stage of the justice system, from community safety, crime reduction, and early intervention, to court services, sentencing, Corrections, and reintegration of offenders.

SUPPORTS FOR CAREGIVING: B+

Early childhood care and education has been a particular policy focus recently, and this has implications for caregivers. From childcare, to supports for caregivers of people with disabilities, to home care for ailing adults and seniors, we expect government to recognize unpaid or underpaid labour provided by caregivers, most frequently women. Government must not enact policies that increase the burden on caregivers, without increasing supports.

Additional investment in early childhood care and education that increases quality, accessibility, affordability, and focus on child development — A

↗ The Preschool Excellence Initiative has increased investment in early childhood care and education from $5.35 million in 2009 to $11.3 million in the coming year. In the view of the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, the Preschool Excellence Initiative represents a milestone achievement. As the Initiative continues to roll out, it will support learning and development for children from birth to age four. Importantly, the Initiative recognizes and supports women's labourforce participation and also creates opportunities for employers of parents of young children.

↗ Kindergarten is now part of the public school system. There were challenges along the way, but this is a significant achievement.

↗ Forty Early Years Centres have been set up to provide quality-driven care and learning for children with regulated fees for parents. These will offer over 1,340 day care spaces.

↗ Changes to the Day Care Subsidy Program mean more families can qualify and higher rates are paid to child care centres on behalf of clients. Provincial Early Years Centres will not be permitted to charge rates above the child care subsidy; this means subsidized families will not have to pay extra charges out of pocket at Early Years Centres.

↗ A provincial Child Care Registry has been launched to help parents find information and register for wait lists for their choice of centres across PEI.

→ We celebrate the Preschool Excellence Initiative, and we also emphasize that it is still a work in progress. Most urgently needed are spaces for infants. Government reports it is a priority for 2011 to establish Infant Homes that will increase infant spaces by 72%. To establish the Homes, government will begin offering a start-up grant for equipment and other needs, as well as annual funding of $1,500 per infant. This work cannot happen soon enough.

SUPPORTS FOR CAREGIVING, *continued*

Consultation and planning with early-childhood educators for changes in early childhood care and education — A-

↗ Consultation and planning with early childhood educators has had a positive effect on wages, opportunities, and training. This is good news.

↗ A hundred early childhood educators have been hired by school boards to teach kindergarten in the public schools and are now on the PEI Teachers' Federation pay grid and are earning more now than previously; when they complete their B.Ed. programs they will be earning more.

↗ The new wage structure for early learning centres will result in increased income for both directors and staff. In year one, directors' wages will rise to $21/hour and Level 2 certified staff will earn between $15/hour and $16.88/hour.

↗ Uncertified staff will be offered the opportunity to become certified through a 90-hour program; once completed, they will get $2/hour wage increases.

→ The Advisory Council remains concerned that there is a lag in getting currently uncertified early childhood staff up to the standard training for certification after so many of the most highly trained early childhood educators left early childhood centres for the public school system. We will be watching for the impact of the Skills PEI Early Childhood Development program, designed to assist about 150 women working in the early childhood sector to obtain mandatory entry-level requirements. There is need for speed for government to assist staff to become qualified. The Advisory Council will be looking for close monitoring of quality and enforcement of regulations that support quality in the early childhood sector.

Measures to address the needs of seniors for elder care, home care, and other non-professional services in their homes and communities — B-

↗ There has been an increase of $2 million to the Home Care budget in the past two years, with a further 17% increase committed in the 2011-2012 budget. There has been an increase of 30+ full-time equivalent staff for home care, and funding is promised for a pilot project to provide home care to frail seniors. These are important investments that signal an ongoing commitment to seniors' health.

↗ The Advisory Council recognizes improvements to programs that are important to seniors: slightly increased eligibility for the Seniors Home Repair program and substantial investment in the Palliative Home Care Drug program.

↗ The Advisory Council supports government's work with health and community partners to develop a Provincial Dementia Strategy. We encourage government to continue using partnerships and collaborative models to benefit seniors' mobility and health.

→ These investments and pilot projects in home care meet Council's expectations. However, the Advisory Council suggests that home care initiatives are starting from almost nothing and must respond to the increasing demands of an aging population. The Council advises that seniors should be a major focus of and will be great beneficiaries from a poverty reduction plan for the Island. The number of seniors on the Island is set to explode, and reactive policy-making will not be enough: What is the ten-year plan to support them and those who help care for them?

The Advisory Council on the Status of Women is encouraged to see investment in the early years that will benefit children, and is additionally impressed that the programs for children support their caregivers. Caregiving for seniors is clearly getting fresh attention from government, as well. Government's challenge will be to plan responses that keep ahead of the needs of the aging population.

WOMEN'S HEALTH: C-

We expect government to sustain a strong system for acute care, but to relieve future burdens on the acute care system by continuing to take steps that recognize whole-body holistic health and that address social determinants of health such as gender, income, language, and culture. We encourage government to demonstrate a commitment to wellness and prevention in health.

Enhanced initiatives to provide appropriate, gender-specific mental health programming — D

→ There have been no significant changes to gender-specific mental health programming since 2009. The grading criteria for the Equality Report Card set the status quo at a D grade.

↗ The Province has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities – an important step for which we say congratulations. Compliance with this Convention will require changes to our provincial public guardianship laws to limit the use of substitute decision-making. The Advisory Council sees this as a significant human rights issue that affects seniors, people with mental health problems, and people with intellectual challenges. We strongly urge government to amend the Public Trustee Act. When PEI has enacted supported decision-making legislation, Council will consider this a concrete step to support women's equality.

→ Partnership is essential for women's mental health programming. For instance, programs offered by community-based organizations such as the Canadian Mental Health Association at centres such as the Fitzroy Centre, Notre Dame Place, and the Clubhouse in Alberton are key in promoting, protecting, and improving mental health, and they need to be well supported.

Focus Group Highlights

Participants in a focus group saw a strong connection between trauma, especially in childhood, and some mental health conditions. They identified the need for children's safety, for supports for adults to deal with grief and anger, and for supports for good parenting as very important to them.

↘ Community Mental Health continues to make up about 1.6% of the Health PEI budget and acute mental health services make up about 2.9%. The Advisory Council members express dismay at chronically limited resources for Community Mental Health. We advocate for increased investment and expansion of community mental health services. Council members are concerned about the general shortage of mental health therapists to meet the demand in the community. There are no easy answers, but Council members wonder, are there changes that could be made to the service delivery model for community mental health so that non-crisis cases still get timely help and support? Would there be benefit in putting priority on services for children and youth? Is it time for a recruitment strategy for mental health therapists as there has been for doctors and nurses?

Increased integration of nurse practitioners into the health-care system, including instituting a Sexual Abuse Nurse Examiner (SANE) program — B-

↗ The Advisory Council congratulates government for completing the hiring of two new Nurse Practitioners since 2009, and initiating hiring of a third, to bring the province's total to five. These are concrete steps. Executive Council has also endorsed enhanced integration of nurse practitioners. The Advisory Council looks forward to government meeting its promises and continuing to demonstrate its commitment to integrating nurse practitioners into the health-care system.

↗ Training for Queen Elizabeth Hospital nurses in the Sexual Abuse Nurse Examiner program is slated to take place in September of this year. The Advisory Council looks forward to updates on this important initiative.

WOMEN'S HEALTH, *continued*

Enhanced services for women with addictions — D

→ There have been no reported significant enhancements to addiction services for women since 2009. The grading criteria for the Equality Report Card set the status quo at a D grade.

↗ Since the 2009 Equality Report Card, the Needle Exchange program in Charlottetown was relocated to a more appropriate location, in the Professional Boardwalk Centre, as recommended by the Advisory Council and others.

→ Advisory Council members emphasize that addictions issues are urgent: all of PEI society experiences the negative effects of addictions and mental health issues.

↘ As in 2009, the Advisory Council calls for physically accessible extended care facilities or recovery homes, for both women and men, and facilities in Summerside as well as Charlottetown. We call on government to better address the root causes of women's addictions, to diversify treatment options (including moving beyond the AA or disease model), and to improve financial and social supports for women going through programs or attending treatment.

Focus Group Highlights

Participants in a focus group put highest priority on youth safety and, to them, this included preventing addictions, through programs, services, and opportunities for young people. Focus group participants felt that addictions rehabilitation services for all ages were needed in more communities across PEI.

Steps towards increased birthing options for Island women, towards an eventual birthing centre — C+

↗ The Advisory Council is heartened to see that a Midwifery Task Force was set up to explore the role of midwifery in PEI health care and that it includes a representative from community-based advocates for birthing options.

↗ It is very encouraging news that following from the work of the Midwifery Task Force, the Department of Health has started meetings to plan Midwifery Implementation. This is a good start, and the Advisory Council acknowledges that making a start on something entirely new to the health system is difficult. Establishing this task force required strong leadership from the Minister of Health and Wellness. The Advisory Council congratulates the Department for first steps and strongly urges the government to follow through on this planning process for the benefit of PEI women.

The Advisory Council on the Status of Women continues to call for more support for preventive health care, holistic approaches to health, and population health approaches based on social determinants of health. Department of Health reports taking gender into consideration "where warranted." The Advisory Council unequivocally states that gender factors warrant specific attention in mental health services and addiction services. A gender analysis in these areas must truly take into consideration the social pressures and inequities created by women's and men's gender roles and life experiences. Acting on this analysis will have benefits for women and men, youth and adults who are dealing with mental health and addictions issues.

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC STATUS: B-

We expect the provincial government to set a priority on improving the health, dignity, and well-being of Islanders who struggle with a less than livable income. We urge the government to consult and collaborate with community-based organizations to develop a Poverty Reduction Strategy like those in other provinces. We see the three priority areas below as key elements of Poverty Reduction:

Investment in affordable, accessible, appropriate housing, including housing designed to meet the needs of seniors and persons with disabilities — B

↗ The Advisory Council is pleased there has (finally) been a significant infusion of funding into affordable housing in PEI. This funding was urgently needed. Through provincial and federal funding programs in 2009/2010, the Province spent over $4.1 million on creation and renovation of new and existing social and affordable housing, and an additional $8.5 million spending is to come in the next two years.

↗ The Disability Action Council is helping to integrate disability analysis into decision-making and is advancing recommendations to construct accessible housing units. And, indeed, housing initiatives are responding to some diversity priorities, with 50 new units for people with disabilities, 25 new units for seniors, and 32 new family units, four of which are accessible.

↗ In 2011-2012, 14 new units for people with disabilities and 90 new units for seniors will be built; however, only 25% of new units for seniors will be accessible.

→ The Advisory Council identifies seniors' housing as one aspect of a larger concern: the income of seniors. Many seniors still cannot manage "affordable" rates for rent because of lack of income. The Atlantic Seniors Housing Research Alliance found that more than 40% of PEI seniors are said to be in core housing need, spending more than 30% of their income for up-to-standard housing, and seniors are more likely than other Islanders to be in core housing need. Women are more affected than men because more women have lower incomes (including smaller pensions), they are less likely to own their own homes, and a larger percentage are renters.

→ When about 65% of households that receive social services support include a person with a disability, it is clear that income is a major issue for people with disabilities as well, and this has an impact on housing. Advocates for people with intellectual disabilities are concerned that there are young people with intellectual disabilities still living in long-term care facilities, and it's still hard to get the support people need to live more independently.

Focus Group Highlights

Participants in a focus group indicated that in their experience, more income support is needed, including more support to help people make transitions from assistance to independent livelihoods. Reducing the stigma on receiving help was very important to focus group participants.

The participants named couch surfing, homelessness, and unsafe living conditions as problems in PEI. They suggested that government should consider ways to provide supports and services across PEI and to better use public buildings (such as schools) and facilities with public funding (such as wellness centres) to provide non-stigmatizing support for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

↘ While the number of affordable housing units has been growing, the 2010 PEI Report on Homelessness also shows growth in the waiting lists for both family and seniors' housing. This report shows that 272 people on PEI were homeless and stayed in an emergency shelter in 2010. Of them, 135 (50%) were women. *Women in PEI: A Statistical Review* says that in 38.9% of PEI households, a woman is the person who pays the bills for the home (the "primary household maintainer"). More than a quarter of these women are seniors, aged 65 or older.

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC STATUS, *continued*

Increased allotment of funds for direct payment to social services recipients to bring them up to a standard of living in which all basic needs are met — C

↗ Government has finally ended the clawback of the National Child Benefit for families with children who are receiving social assistance. This will benefit families by $66 per month per child and affect about 1,600 children. This is good news.

↗ Changes to the Child Care Subsidy mean more families qualify and child care centres receive a higher rate, and these improvements are welcome.

→ In June 2009, food rates increased by 10% (a total budget increase of about $600,000), and shelter rates increased by 5% (a budget increase of about $940,000). These were important increases. However, these rates still do not allow recipients to meet their needs for adequate food and shelter, amid rising costs. In neighbouring Nova Scotia, a recent food costing study showed a 26.5% increase in costs from 2002 to 2010 for a basic nutritious food basket for a family of four, including a 7.7% increase from 2008 to 2010. According to the 2010 national Hunger Count, more than 35% of food bank users on PEI were social assistance recipients. Not enough is still not enough.

→ The Advisory Council was pleased to see that the Social Assistance Act review resulted in 8 recommendations, including increasing income assistance, helping bridge the transition to work, supporting children for a better future, and providing more assistance to seniors, especially seniors with a disability. The Council still calls on government to act to protect the privacy, rights, and dignity of social assistance recipients under investigation or whose claims are under appeal.

↗ The initiative to use direct deposit for social assistance benefits is a good step to reduce stigma.

Improvements to the Employment Standards Act that improve working conditions and wages for non-unionized workers — B

↗ Long-awaited amendments finally were made to Employment Standards in fall 2009 and will increase work-life balance through increased access to caregiving leaves; extension of parental leaves if child is ill; paid sick leave for employees who have worked with employer more than five years; vacation for employees who have worked for employer more than eight years; paid bereavement leave for family; expansion of bereavement benefits for extended family; and other improvements.

↗ The Advisory Council particularly congratulates government for setting a precedent in Canada by providing for paid sick leave for employees who have worked with an employer more than five years. Bravo.

↗ Minimum wage has increased from $8/hour to $9/hour; it will increase to $9.30 in June, $9.60 in October, and reach $10 in April 2012. This represents a 25% increase from 2009 to 2012. We ask that as these increases come about, government examine indexing the minimum wage to the cost of living.

→ The Advisory Council strongly urges government to strike the (unproclaimed) part of the Employment Standards Act that would allow for multiple wage levels (two-tiered minimum wage). A two-tiered wage would discriminate against women.

The Advisory Council congratulates government for moving from a grade of D to a grade of B – in just two years. In addition to improving social assistance and housing programs and employment standards, government has taken some very good first steps towards poverty reduction. We and other community organizations were pleased to provide recent input into ways to engage government and the public in making a plan to reduce poverty and increase social prosperity in PEI. Steps towards poverty reduction have been slow, but we are hopeful that planning is now moving in a positive direction, and we look forward to playing our part.

Thanks

The members and staff of the PEI Advisory Council on the Status of Women would like to thank the many groups in the community and in government that contributed information for this report. We thank those who received and reviewed whole or partial drafts and provided corrections, comments, insights, and analysis as we prepared this Equality Report Card. We particularly acknowledge the time that people and groups contributed on an unpaid volunteer basis.

We acknowledge and thank the following:

Within government:

- Departmental representatives in all departments of government and in the government offices of Executive Council and the Interministerial Women's Secretariat.
- The Premier, the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, and all Ministers and Deputy Ministers of government.

Within the community:

- Representatives from community organizations who were asked to review parts of the draft Equality Report Card. Most of these groups provided feedback: Birthing Options Research Network, Chief Mary Bernard Memorial Women's Shelter, Community Legal Information Association, Early Childhood Development Association, East Prince Women's Information Centre, Family Violence Prevention Services, Justice Options for Women, PEI Coalition for Women in Government, PEI Council of People with Disabilities, PEI Family Violence Prevention Services, PEI Federation of Labour, PEI People First, PEI Seniors' Federation, PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre, Women's Network PEI, and PEI Working Group for a Livable Income (and its member groups).
- Individual women in the community who were consulted by Advisory Council members for their comments and perspectives.
- Women who have called the Advisory Council on the Status of Women office to share their experiences and to help us identify the gaps in policy, services, and legislation that affect their lives.
- Participants in the focus group whose analysis complemented that of the Advisory Council and kept the Equality Report Card grounded.

About the Focus Group

The Advisory Council on the Status of Women wanted the 2011 Equality Report Card to better represent the experience and points of view of vulnerable women across Prince Edward Island, and to present their ideas in a safe and non-identifying way. Advisory Council staff used a project under the STEPS for Women initiative (funded by Status of Women Canada) to put together an interest-based focus group. The focus group referred to in this Equality Report Card was held April 27, 2011. The group selected was a pre-existing group recommended by an Advisory Council member. It was made up of nine women and one man who met the Advisory Council's definition of "unrepresented" citizens; that is, people not active in or belonging to any community organizations the Advisory Council typically consults to validate the results of the Report Card.

The focus group was held in rural Prince Edward Island and included young women and lone parents. During the focus group, one or more participants identified themselves as having had experiences of violence, childhood abuse or trauma, mental illness, separation or divorce, addictions, low income, unemployment, caregiving challenges, involvement in the justice system as victims, involvement in the justice system as offenders, and/or discrimination based on gender. Participants were not asked to identify their age, ability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or other markers of diversity.

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